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AN *Eng. Poet. vol 25*
ESSAY

ON THE
POETS.

Ars adeo latet Arte sua. — Ovid.

By BEZALEEL MORRICE. *X*



L O N D O N :

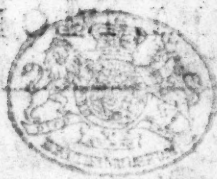
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THE ASSAY

ON THE

PROPERTIES



BY J. W. B. B.

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THE
PREFACE.

POETRY is for the most part,
a delicate Imitation or Copy
of Nature; and those Pie-
ces of it, in which the finest strokes are
to be found, with the truest Resem-
blance of its Origenal, are most justly
and lastingly admir'd,

Correctness (or exact Writing) is
what very few have attain'd to, Who

THE PREFACE.

at the same Time have shewn any remarkable real Excellence; I mean that Beauty, Sublimity, Force and Ease, which Poetry of all Things most particularly requires; for it claims the very greatest Genius, Judgment, Knowledge, and Care in Conjunction, to reconcile these well together.

The chief Cause of Incorrectness, (or rather Deficiency of real and compleat Excellence) in the most considerable of our English Poets, (who are most of them very imperfect) has been, as I imagin, from a too partial and unmanly fondness of their own Wit, and a too great and general Indulgeance allow'd them from their Admirers, or possibly from a too greedy Desire of Gain, or
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The PREFACE.

re- servile Inclination to please ; in short
ean from want of sufficient Examination
and and Care.

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In what Manner I have proceeded
as to this small Attempt, in a point so
nice, so difficult, and self-denying as
this, I dare not say; but must leave
to the censure of the impartial and ju-
dicious.

But indeed, whatever some may
imagine, I cannot but conceive Poetry
to be at present (and ever to have been
as yet) under to many Disadvantages
amongst us, to arrive at any very con-
siderable Compleatness ; to be even ca-
pab'e of gaining that noble Simplici-
ty so eminently remarkable in the most
celebra-

The PREFACE.

*celebrated of the Antients ; that
graceful, neat, and most admirably
seeming Negligence, where the finest
Art is conceall'd under the Resemblance
of a familiar Ease, and in reality is
the highest pitch of Human Skill.*



A N



AN
ESSAY
ON THE
POETS.



YE *Bards* ! of shallow Sence, but specious Sound ;

YE *Critics* too, prepostrously profound ;

Hither, with Me, direct your needful Sight,

And much insulted Nature, learn to right:

Nature ! whose sacred Laws ye disallow,

And to vain Idols of your Fancy bow :

View

View each discreet, and glorious antient Bard,
 Some Moderns too with proper Care regard ;
 Thus with submission due, receive your Law :
 And Rules to frame your future Conduct, draw.

Immortal *Homer* pass, and *Virgil* by ;
 Nor lett's in vain aspiring, aim so high ;
 Their Beauty, State, Variety, and Fire,
 With utmost Aim, We can — alone admire !

Judicious *Horace*, claims our earnest View,
 A worthy Bard ! discerning Critic too !
 Hail glorious Pattern ! stor'd with manly Sence,
 Master of true poetic Excellence !
 You fitly mingle Profit with Delight,
 And nobly Act the Precepts that you Write,

Possessing all, seem wholly void of Care ;
 The Sage's Depth, and solid Weight you bear,
 Mixt with the lively Courtiers Ease and Ayr :
 Happy succeeding Bards, cou'st Thou impart
 Thy native Genius, with thy useful Art ;
 Thy Art ! whose Rules with clearest Reason joyn'd,
 Yeild such Directions to th' enquiring Mind,
 Whoever wou'd excel, must first prepare
 To trace it's Precepts with the strictest Care :
 But most too feeble, or neglectful still,
 Our Ears alone impertinently fill
 With flight and frothy Phrase, for Genius and for
 Skill.

Sprightly *Anacreon* equal Heed requires ;
 Patron of Mirth, and Joy, and gay Desires :

B

Who

Who can Sweet *Bard* ! thy tempting Wiles refuse
 Such is the Manner of thy lovely Muse ;
 And in such free and lively Ways express'd,
 It might subdue the Stoic's rigid Breast :
 Oh ! wou'd the whining Bard, (whose Fancy shines
 In flashy Flights) regard thy beautiful Lines,
 Convinc'd of his mistake he'd quickly find
 Nothing like easy Nature sways the Mind ;
 All nauseous Affectation he'd remove,
 And be more just to Sense, Himself, and Love.

Who hear's with Wonder, antient Tales relate
 Of *Dioclesian's* voluntary Fate ;
 Who chang'd for Privacy imperial State !
 The Cause (by Thee reveal'd) oh ! *Hesiod* ! too,
 With equal Wonder, shall delighted view :

Thy

refuse Thy rival Muse (with Natures self at strife)
 Th' inviting Pleasures of a rural Life
 Does with such Truth, and beautiful Ease express ;
 In such a proper, tho' an humble Dress,
 shine As might induce the loftiest Mind to bow,
 s, And leave e'en Crowns and Scepters for the
 Plough.

Naso's inviting Grace attract's our Eyes,
 ove Ever imparting Pleasure, and Surprise :
 What tho' (as doating on Himself) He seems
 relate Sometimes too far to lengthen out his Theams ;
 { The sweet Delight e'en this afford's is such,
 How can we think He ever says too much ?
 oo, Proceed delicious Bard ! like thy *Narcissus* view
 Thy own fair Form, be so transported too ;

If Beauty in excess is lawful Plea,
 A most peculiar Right belongs to Thee!
 For who a more prevailing Way cou'd find
 To strike Impressions on the yielding Mind;
 Thus o'er each Sex an Influence he gains,
 And in each ravish'd Breast in Triumph reigns.

Gentle *Tibullus* view with equal Care,
 With what a tender Art he moves the Fair!
 Far more prevailing than the gaudy Show,
 And Airs and Gestures of the modern Beau;
 That now successfully assail the Heart,
 Secure against the Poet's vainer Art.

Nature is two peculiar Ways inclin'd
 To claim Dominion o'er the human Mind;

In these two various Ways alike excells ;
 By Love she courts Us, and by Fear compells :
 These pow'rful Passions, when portray'd right,
 To vast Concern the yielding Mind incite ;
 And what is most of our Concern the Cause,
 Still from the Soul a pleas'd Attention draws :
 What most can raise Astonishment and Fear,
 Does in the *Grecian* tragic Scenes appear !
 Wou'd you both find and feel them well ? peruse
 The Terrors of the *Sophoclean* Muse !

These and the like, make your Examples still,
 Try, as Ye can, to gain their wond'rous Skill ;

Like

Like them have due Regard to Nature's Laws;
 See! see! their Worth just Approbation draws
 From ev'ry Age, and this the truest Cause:
 The surest Way wou'd ye to Fame advance?
 Let all Contrivance seem th' Effect of Chance!
 What's most approv'd, and ever holds to please,
 Is labour'd Negligence, and studied Ease:
 Yet scorn all meaness when Ye wou'd be plain;
 And when ye wou'd ascend, your Force restrain,
 And empty Greatness equally disdain:
 Affected Strains, where Phrase it's Pomp display's
 Glitt'ring appears, like *Sol's refulgent Raies*;
 Or with mean Sence (that humbly creep's the
 while)
 Rise, rage, and roar, in a tremendous Style;

May

May light mistaken Minds a while surprize,
 But soon the vain and empty Glory fly;
 Whilst true Desert prevailing at the last,
 Conquers the Soul, when Prejudice is pass'd,
 And in eternal Fetters hold's it fast.

From *Bards*, in distant Lands and Ages born;
 Lets turn to worthies that our Isle adorn;
 Some of the chief of the reputed Throng
 Lets cull, and place in our instructive Song.

Oh! cou'd We now like daring *Milton* sing,
 Prodigious, mighty and amazing Theams!
 In strains so solid, nervous, and sublime,

Use such Invention, such prevailing Force
 As He, when He surprizingly relates,
 The bold Adventures of th' infernal Chief,
 Who pass'd (tho' thrice three-fold) Hell's horrid Gates;
 Held by dread Forms, and by Sulphurious Flames
 Enclosed; thro' *Chaos*, (seat of endless Feud!
 Distraction! Desolation! wild Uproar!)
 Enrag'd, arriv'd in blissful Paradise;
 And in Man's Ruin sought revengeful Sway.

Could we indeed, this mighty *Bard* pursue,
 Attempt so nobly, and so nobly do;
 But yet our purpose more concisely hold,
 And be correct, and regular as bold;
 The *British* Muse, thro' her victorious Strain,
 From all Contenders shou'd the Prize obtain;

Behold

Behold with Joy her Glory's vast Increase
And vye with antient *Italy*, and *Greece*.

Whil't ev'ry Voice do's his Desert proclaim,
And place Him foremost in *Britannia's* Fame;
Improving *Spencer*, (our more early Grace)
By Merit's justest Claim enjoy's a Place:
What Monuments of an eternal Praise
To Thee! oh gen'rous *Bard*! shou'd *Britons* raise?
Had Art in thee! compleat Assistance joyn'd
To perfect what so nobly is design'd!
With a peculiar, and engaging Air,
He does the Mind for worthiest Acts prepare;
And tho' by Fate oppress'd, serenely sings,
Whil't from his Muse Delight with Profit springs;

In all Attempts successfully assails,
 With choice Instruction couch'd in pleasing Tales;
 He first of all, the simple doric strains
 With proper Grace transfer'd to *Britain's* Plains,
 And with his Prize unrivall'd still remains.

Behold great *Shakespear* like the Morning Star,
 In unextinguish'd Glory from afar!
 The Pride and Grace of the preceeding Age,
 And still chief Lustre of the *British* Stage:
 Yet this triumphant, this transcendant He,
 Is not from many Imperfections free;
 Thus richest Gems in sordid Earth are found,
 And Weeds on most luxurious Soils abound:
 Such Ills, that in the most embellish'd Mind
 Sometimes unsuiting Habitation find,

A Cause for friendly fit Reproof produce,
And speak the worthy Critic's needful Use.

From Nature, Wit deriv'd it's early Birth,
Like Trees proceeding from the gen'rous Earth;
As they, however bountiful and fair,
Still need the Gard'ners beneficial Care;
Wit need's the skillful Critic's, to displace
Injurious Stains, and highthen ev'ry Grace;
With Judgment and industrious Care, to find
Each secret Good; and be severely kind;
Such antient Critics were; beneath their View,
And just Regard, a while it choicely grew;
But oh! in Time, a strange and Savage Race
Encroaching, did the noble Plant debase;

With Arrogance, and with a stubborn Will,
 Watch'd o'er it's Growth, only to use it ill,
 And proudly shew their false malicious Skill :
 By these assaulted many barb'rous Ways
 It droops, and in it's worthiest Parts decays ;
 Like Frosts they nip, like Locusts they defile,
 And have no Care but destroy and spoil.

Oh ! might I see that golden Time renew
 (More blest than *Albion*, yet was known to view)
 When Prejudice and Arrogance remov'd,
 Wit shall be rightly cherish'd and belov'd ;
 When Critics give to Merit due Regard,
 And Patrons fit Protection and Reward

Observe

Observe the soothing *Waller's* courtly Lays;
 To Love and Beauty his Devoirs He pays,
 And sound's the Victor's, and the Monarch's Praise:
 He prun'd our Language, and refin'd our Thought;
 But not improving to Perfection brought,
 Something still in his Verse uncouth appears
 To minds most curious, and the nicest Ears;
 His Turns too, bearing frequent influence,
 Lessen the bold majestic Force of Sence.

Regard the solitary *Cowley* claims;
 Who often, nor successless, nobly aims:
 But, as the *Greyhound's* free and active Force
 Gives mod'rate Pastime in the speedy Course;
 And what in little Time and Space is done,
 Is finish'd almost when and where begun,

Whereas

Whereas the *Beagle* (that in slower Pace
 With Scent and Cry pursues the distant Chace)
 By much-extending both the Time and Bounds,
 Thro' various pleasing Scenes, with chearful Sounds,
 O'er Mountains, and thro' echoing Vales and Fields
 Conveying——choicer Recreation yields;

So *Cowley* do's too hasty Vigour use,
 And Fancy's Game too rapidly pursues;
 His eager Starts baffle the Mind's Desire,
 And the more settled Expectation tire;
 Nay, to be just, tho' seemingly severe,
 Sometimes Propriety is wanting——here;
 And whilst his roving Thoughts in Mazes fly;
 Now too remote, now as obscurely high,
 Low and ill-manag'd his Expressions lye;

With

With Him, most Poets of the former Age,
 Highly indulgent to their Fancies Rage,
 In Words, and Numbers too remiss appear ;
 And whilst they sooth the Mind, disgust the Ear ;
 Most now, to sinking softness are inclin'd,
 And to delight our Ears, offend the Mind ;
 Slight polish'd Terms they plentifully afford,
 But with substantial Sence are meanly stor'd :
 Of all that have attempted yet, how Few
 (To Sence, Sound, Substance, and Appearance true)
 Have Fate and their united Aims decreed,
 Each Way, endeav'ring rightly, to succeed ?
 You'd Ye in decent, sly, and artful Rage,
 With rival Wits adventrously engage ?
 Remark the celebrated *Dryden* well,

Who

Who do's in this triumphantly excel ;
 The sharpness of a *Satire's* scornful smile
 Is fully seen in his ironic Style ;
 This in *Mac Fleckno* is compleatly shown,
 The skilfull'st Pattern *Britain* yet has known :

Often this *Bard*, and various Ways prevails ;
 But too regardless in Translations, fails ;
 No Mortal's Skill a Just Translation makes ;
 But who th' Impression of his Author's takes ;
 We must with Care his Disposition find,
 Conform to his, the Temper of our Mind ;
 We must explore his utmost Aim and End,
 Into th' abstrusest of his Thoughts descend,
 And know him, as a Man his dearest Friend :

He must be seiz'd like *Proteus*, nor escape;
 Our firm Embrace in any vary'd Shape;
 Each way He leads, we punctually must trace,
 Preserve his Spirit, and peculiar Grace;
 For tho' wee need not servily pursue
 His words; his Meaning must be still in View,
 Be never alter'd; this we must express
 With constant Zeal; and only change his Dress;
 In all things at a real Likeness aim,
 A full, yet unconstrain'd Resemblance frame;
 Be (more than his Interpreter) the same.

Observe what sweet Amusement, *Prior* brings;
 When eas'd of State-affairs, the Poet sings!
 Mark, how his Muse do's variously prevail,
 And force Concern! or form a pleasing Tale!

D

Him

Him most, for Laies facetiously polite;
Britons shall with deserv'd Applause requite;
 Nor shall the constant Nut-brown Maid, as told
 (As gracefully reviv'd) by Him, grow old;
 Tho' since her Birth so many Years have roul'd.

Wilmot observe, who once so blithly sung;
Wilmot ! the noble, lovely, gay, and young;
 Not most industrious the Precise to please,
 His Words and Numbers flow with careless Ease;
 His Fancy beauteous, not to Rule confin'd;
 Wild as the Season was his sportive Mind;
 Void of Restraint, he with a careless Air
 Rally's the Foppish, and attack's the Fair;
 For Victory ordain'd, He still pursues
 Th' inviting Sex, and bravely still subdues;

Oh!

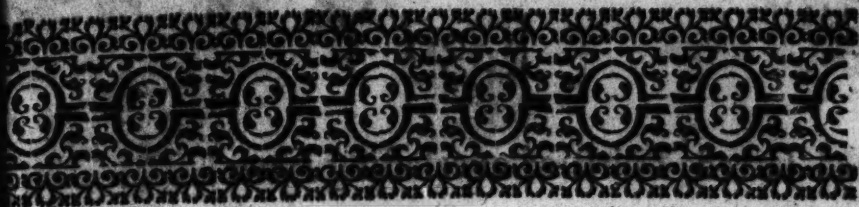
Oh ! was He but from nauseous Error free,
 He Mirth's and Love's auspicious Guide shou'd be:
 Thus, much has Justice in his Cause express'd;
 In modest silence let's conceal the rest.

Oldham regard, of equal Fame, and Years ;
 In whom sweet *Wilmot* more improv'd appears:
 Solid, acute ; soft, strong ; sublime, and gay ;
 Fruitful as *August*, fresh as blooming *May* :
 Oh ! had He liv'd his Language to refine,
 And duly polish ev'ry manly Line ;
 He Love and Praise shou'd plentifully share ;
 Cou'd He his vain presumptuous Rants forbear,
 Check his too furious Spleen, and helpless Woman
 spare.

Thus have I strove to shew the Road to Fame,
 And from false Paths, by Patterns, to reclaim;
 Errors in Wit to vast Excess are grown,
 But Natures Pow'r let the Discreeter own;
 Her just Directions still with Care obey,
 And humbly follow, as she leads the Way;
 For oh! how must the Mean (neglecting Her)
 Mistaken wander? When then the Noblest err!
 And whilst They ill-concerted Measurers take,
 True Reason too regardlessly forsake.



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THE
CONDITION
OF
ART.



HAT Hardship, Care, and Toyl, must
Men sustain

The true stupendious Highth of *Art* to

gain ?

er rough, and barren Steeps they lab'ring go ;

leaving afar, Delight and Ease below !

Oh !

Oh ! sacred Thirst of everlasting *Fame* !
 Possessing Thee ; thro' Prejudice and Blame
 They rush ; and hold their undeverted Aim :
 Thro' Want, Distress, Oppression, and Disgrace ;
 Exposed to all that's insolent and base,
 And often most for-lorn of human Race :
 Yet some, by safe and more commodious Ways,
 Procure th' Advantage of immediate Praise ;
 Thro' Pomp, Pretence, and fair Appearance, gain
 An Approbation from the Light and Vain ;
 On weak Foundation these their Glory build,
 Which must to Time, and surer Knowledge yield
 Tho' priz'd, yet mean ; and slight, tho' seeming
 fine ;
 The first have Substance, and the last but Sign.

Behold how Nature here profusely pours
 The various Beauty of her vulgar Stores !
 Behold her Gifts expanded to the Sight !
 O ! ev'ry Field affords a cheap Delight !
 These superficial Treasures, all, that please,
 With easy visit, and attain with Ease ;
 But Nature do's her choicest Wealth confine
 To barren Lands, beneath the burning Line ;
 Where Serpents lurk, and Savage Beasts abide,
 And which from Us devouring Seas divide ;
 And they who wou'd the pretious Prize procure,
 Must dreadful Hazzard and Fateague endure :
 'Tis thus with Art—a cheap, or easy Rate,
 Can never purchase what is truly Great.

F I N I S.

I should how Nature here presents
 the various Beauty of her vulgar stores!
 Should her Gifts expanded to the sight!
 Every Field affords a cheap Delight!
 These superficial Treasures, all that please
 With transitory and attain with Ease!
 Nature God's hand is on the Wealth confine
 barren Lands, and the burning Line;
 Here Serpents hiss, and large Beasts abide
 and win from Us devouring Sins divide;
 And they who would the precious Prize procure
 Of deadly Hazard and Intemperance endure
 'Tis thus with Art—a cheap, or easy Rate
 Can never purchase what is truly Great.



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